

Appln No. 10/713,085
Amdt. Dated June 7, 2004
Response to Office action of April 20, 2004

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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the Office Action dated April 20, 2004.

AMENDMENTS

Claim 1 has been amended to specify that the printer includes a source of pressurized air.

Basis for this amendment can be found in previous claim 11, now deleted.

CLAIM REJECTIONS - 35 USC § 102

In his Office Action, the Examiner accepted that Hetzer et al (US 5,929,877) fails to disclose air as a fluid which passes through passages in a nozzle guard to inhibit build up of foreign particles on a nozzle array. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his objection under 35 USC § 102.

CLAIM REJECTIONS - 35 USC § 103

The Applicant contests the Examiner's assertion that it would be obvious to use air for inhibiting the build up of foreign particles on the nozzle array in view of the disclosures of Hetzer et al (US 5,929,877) and Ebisawa (US 5,528,271).

Ebisawa discloses a printer equipped with an air supply for the purpose of minimizing ink mist as ink droplets hit the print medium. The air flow in Ebisawa then is clearly not for the purpose of preventing build up of foreign particle on the nozzle array. On the contrary, the printer disclosed in Ebisawa has shield plates which prevent the air flow from reaching the nozzle array. Reference is made in particular to column 5, lines 36-39, where it is stated:

... shield plates 13 for shielding the blast openings 9 are provided on the carriage 2 so that the air may not be blown up near the recording head 1 along the ink discharge surface 1A ...

In short, Ebisawa gives no motivation whatsoever to the skilled person to use air in combination with a nozzle guard to inhibit the build up of foreign particles on a nozzle array. In Ebisawa, the air is used for an entirely different purpose and is shielded away from the nozzle array. Ebisawa, therefore, teaches away from the use of air for inhibiting build up

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of foreign particles on a nozzle array. There is no teaching in Ebisawa which could conceivably guide the skilled person to the present invention, even if the skilled person was fully aware of the solvent-based cleaning system described in Hetzer.

From Hetzer, the skilled person learns that he must use solvent to clean the nozzles. From Ebisawa, the skilled person learns that he must use air to avoid the deleterious effects of ink mist. He also learns from Ebisawa that this air flow should be shielded away from the ink nozzles, which is in total contrast to what is being claimed in the present application.

The Applicant submits that there is no reason the skilled person would find it obvious to use air flow in a nozzle guard, having read the disclosures of Hetzer and Ebisawa. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his objections under 35 USC § 103.

It is respectfully submitted that all of the Examiner's objections have been successfully traversed. Accordingly, it is submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the application is courteously solicited.

Very respectfully,

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